NUMB. CCLIII.

The SPECTATOR.

Indignor quicquam reprehendi, non quia craſsè
Compoſitum, illepidève putetur, ſed quia nuper. Hor.

Thurſday, December 20. 1711.

THERE is nothing which more denotes a great Mind, than the abhorrence of Envy and Detraction. This Paſſion reigns more among Bad Poets, than among any other of Men.

Where are none more ambitious of Fame, than who are converſant in Poetry, it is very na- for ſuch as have not ſucceeded in it to depre- the Works of thoſe who have. For ſince they not raiſe themſelves to the Reputation of their -Writers, they muſt endeavour to ſink it to own Pitch, if they would ſtill keep themſelves Level with them.

greateſt Wits that ever were produced in Age, lived together in ſo good an Under- g, and celebrated one another with ſo much oſity, that each of them receives an additional from his Contemporaries, and is more fa- for having lived with Men of ſo extraordina- Genius, than if he had himſelf been the ſingle of the Age. I need not tell my Reader, here point at the Reign of *Auguſtus*, and I he will be of my Opinion, that neither *Vir- Horace* would have gained ſo great a Repu- in the World, had they not been the Friends Admirers of each other. Indeed all the great ers of that Age, for whom ſingly we have ſo an Eſteem, ſtand up together as Vouchers for nother's Reputation. But at the ſame time *Virgil* was celebrated by *Gallus*, *Propertius*, *Varius*, *Tucca* and *Ovid*, we know that and *Mævius* were his declared Foes and Ca- ators.

our own Country a Man ſeldom ſets up for a without attacking the Reputation of all his in the Art. The Ignorance of the Mo- the Scriblers of the Age, the Decay of Poe- the Topicks of Detraction, with which he his Entrance into the World: But how more noble is the Fame that is built on Can- and Ingenuity, according to thoſe Beautiful of Sir *John Denham*, in his Poem on *Fletcher*'s

But whither am I ſtraid? I need not raiſe
Trophies to thee from other Mens Diſpraiſe;
Nor is thy Fame on leſſer Ruins built,
Nor needs thy juſter Title the foul Guilt
Of Eaſtern Kings, who to ſecure their Reign
Muſt have their Brothers, Sons, and Kindred Slain.

I am ſorry to find that an Author, who is very juſtly eſteemed among the beſt Judges, has admitted ſome Strokes of this Nature into a very fine Poem, I mean *The Art of Criticiſm*, which was publiſhed ſome Months ſince, and is a Maſterpiece in its kind. The Obſervations follow one another like thoſe in *Horace*'s *Art of Poetry*, without that Methodical Regularity which would have been requiſite in a Proſe Author. They are ſome of them uncommon, but ſuch as the Reader muſt aſſent to, when he ſees them explained with that Elegance and Perſpicuity in which they are delivered. As for thoſe which are the moſt known, and the moſt received, they are placed in ſo beautiful a Light, and illuſtrated with ſuch apt Alluſions, that they have in them all the Graces of Novelty, and make the Reader, who was before acquainted with them, ſtill more convinced of their Truth and Solidity. And here give me leave to mention what Monſieur *Boileau* has ſo very well enlarged upon in the Preface to his Works, that Wit and fine Writing doth not conſiſt ſo much in advancing things that are new, as in giving things that are known an agreeable Turn. It is impoſſible, for us who live in the later Ages of the World, to make Obſervations in Criticiſm, Morality, or in any Art or Science, which have not been touched upon by others. We have little elſe left us, but to repreſent the common Senſe of Mankind in more ſtrong, more beautiful, or more uncommon Lights. If a Reader examines *Horace*'s Art of Poetry, he will find but a very few Precepts in it, which he may not meet with in *Ariſtotle*, and which were not commonly known by all the Poets of the Auguſtan Age. His way of Expreſſing and Applying them, not his Invention of them, is what we are chiefly to admire.

For this reaſon I think there is nothing in the World ſo tireſom as the Works of thoſe Criticks, who write in a poſitive Dogmatick Way, without either Language, Genius or Imagination. If the Reader would ſee how the beſt of the *Latin* Criticks writ, he may find their manner very beautifully deſcribed in the Characters of *Horace*, *Petronius*, *Quintilian* and *Longinus*, as they are drawn in the Eſſay of which I am now ſpeaking.

Since I have mentioned *Longinus*, who in his Reflections has given us the ſame kind of Sublime, which he obſerves in the ſeveral Paſſages that occaſioned them; I cannot but take notice, that our *Engliſh* Author has after the ſame manner exempli-

fied

fied several of his Precepts in the very Precepts themselves. I shall produce two or three Instances of this kind. Speaking of the insipid Smoothness which some Readers are so much in love with, he has the following Verses.

These Equal Syllables *alone require,*
Tho' oft the Ear the open Vowels *tire,*
While Expletives *their feeble Aid* do *join,*
And ten low Words oft creep in one dull Line.

The gaping of the Vowels in the second Line, the Expletive *do* in the third, and the ten Monosyllables in the fourth, give such a Beauty to this Passage, as would have been very much admired in an Ancient Poet. The Reader may observe the following Lines in the same View.

A needless Alexandrine *ends the Song,*
That like a wounded Snake, drags its slow Length along.

And afterwards,

'Tis not enough no Harshness gives Offence,
The Sound *must seem an* Echo *to the* Sense.
Soft *is the Strain when* Zephir *gently blows,*
And the smooth Stream *in* smoother Numbers *flows;*
But when loud Surges lash the sounding Shore,
The hoarse, rough Verse *shou'd like the* Torrent *roar.*
When Ajax *strives, some Rock's vast Weight to throw,*
The Line too labours, *and the Words move* slow;
Not so, when swift Camilla *scours the Plain,*
Flies o'er th' unbending Corn, and skims along the Main.

The beautiful Distich upon *Ajax* in the foregoing Lines, puts me in mind of a Description in *Homer*'s Odyssey, which none of the Criticks have taken notice of. It is where *Sisiphus* is represented lifting his Stone up the Hill, which is no sooner carried to the Top of it, but it immediately tumbles to the Bottom. This double Motion of the Stone is admirably described in the Numbers of these Verses. As in the four first it is heaved up by several *Spondees*, intermixed with proper Breathing-places, and at last trundles down in a continued Line of *Dactyls.*

Καὶ μὴν Σίσυφον εἰσεῖδον, κρατέρ' ἄλγε' ἔχοντα,
Λᾶαν βασάζοντα πελώριον ἀμφοτέρῃσιν.
Ἦτοι ὁ μὲν, σκηριπτόμενος χερσίν τε ποσίν τε,
Λᾶαν ἄνω ὤθεσκε ποτὶ λόφον· ἀλλ' ὅτε μέλλοι
Ἄκρον ὑπερβαλέειν, τότ' ἀποσφάλασκε Κράτος δὲ
Αὖτις ἔπειτα πέδονδε κυλίνδετο λᾶας ἀναιδὴς.

It would be endless to quote Verses out of *Virgil* which have this particular kind of Beauty in the Numbers; but I may take an Occasion in a future Paper to shew several of them which have escaped the Observation of others.

I cannot conclude this Paper without taking notice that we have three Poems in our Tongue, which are of the same Nature, and each of them a Master-piece in its kind; the Essay on Translated Verse, the Essay on the Art of Poetry, and the Essay upon Criticism.

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This Day the 20th Instant, at Lloyd's Coffee-house in Lombard-street, at 4 in the Afternoon (only one Lot) viz. 30 Hhds of excellent French Claret, deep bright and fresh, and of the true Flavour, perfect fine and fit for Keeping, an entire Parcel, in a Vault on the left Hand in the Grocery in Still-yard leading from Thames-street directly to the Still-yard. And 29 half Hhds, 3 Aums, 4 Hhds, and 1 Puncheon of very fine Brandy. 3 Pipes of Red Ribadavia Galicia, and 5 Pipes of Syracuse Wine, deep, bright and strong; and 3 Pipes of White Wine (Note the said Brandys, Galicia, Syracuse and White Wine are all New, and were lately imported from Nantz, and are in a Cellar under the House of Mr. Alexander Merchant over against the Church in St. Martin's Lane (in the Fields. To be sold by Tho. Tomkins, Brokar, in Seething-lane Tower-street.

At the Wine Cellar under the Sign of the Three Tuns in Prince's-street, the upper End of Hedg-lane near Leicester-Fields, is to be sold Messieurs Brook and Hellier's true and natural Port. And at the same Place is likewise to be sold extraordinary good Obrion Claret Wine at 3s. and French White Wine at 2s. a Gallon, and as good French Bourdeaux Brandy as can be had in London at 2s. a Gallon: The best and finest dry Mountain Malaga Sack at 8s. a Gallon both Wines at 7s. a Gallon or 2s. a Quart. White Malaga at 6s. a Gallon or 2od. a Quart. Note, By Reason several Gentlemans Cellars have been often deceived in buying cheap Wines that have not stood the Sea, after it has been in Bottles, we promises those that shall buy of the above vested Wines, that if they are not as good or better than they expected after they have it, he will either change it or return their Money.

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